

Delaware wins \$10.4 million federal grant to strengthen charter school system

Delaware has won a \$10.4 million federal grant to strengthen the state's charter school system, including improved collaboration with other public schools.

Funds from the U.S. Department of Education's Charter School Program will be distributed over four years to support:

- Sharing best practices between charter schools and other public schools;
- Evaluating and enhancing the impact of charter schools on student achievement, families and communities;
- Strengthening the charter school authorization process; and
- Providing subgrants for the planning, program design and initial implementation of new charter schools and expansion and replication of highly effective existing charter schools.

Secretary of Education Susan Bunting said the state always is looking for effective practices that can be used in schools across the state. The state's role is to help share what is working across district and charter lines.

"Delaware designed charter schools with the legislative intent to improve education. This grant will assist the Delaware Department of Education in leveraging best practices and innovative ideas to help all Delaware students, regardless of zip code or socioeconomic status, to have access to a high-quality education," she said.

The grant also will help the Delaware Department of Education to improve its charter authorization process by enhancing

reporting to include additional measures, providing technical assistance to charter school stakeholders and addressing policy to strengthen authorization practices.

Delaware charter schools applying for subgrants from the state must show how they will use the funds to:

- Increase academic achievement for all students in the school as well as educationally disadvantaged students;
- Collaborate to share best practices with district and charter schools;
- Engage the families of educationally disadvantaged children on school choice opportunities with a focus on Delaware's rural and urban areas;
- Leverage partnerships with local agencies (i.e. social services, behavioral health, mental health, educational support, job placement, before/after care) to enhance school services and ensure sustainability.

"Schools seeking subgrants must demonstrate that they have a proven track record of success in providing a quality education to all students and supporting the achievement of educationally disadvantaged students," Bunting said.

Kendall Massett, executive director of the Delaware Charter Schools Network, said Delaware's charter school community is excited for the opportunities this federal grant will provide.

"I have been advocating for an increase in the U.S. Department of Education Charter School Program Fund for the past six years," Massett said. "I saw how previous grants from this fund positively impacted the lives of children in Delaware, and when the federal funding ran out, I knew we needed to get it back. Charter schools are an incredible choice for our children, but the funding challenges to open, expand, or replicate highly effective charter schools can sometimes be too much. The Delaware Charter Schools Network is excited to partner with the Delaware Department of Education on this

grant that will open opportunities and provide more choice for students throughout the state.”

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